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ABSTRACT

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PREFERENCE FOR BARGAINING REPRESENTATIVE:
SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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Recent committal of various higher education faculty organizations to the strategy of collective bargaining raises questions concerning the process of competitive election for institutional bargaining representative. Some tentative guidelines are provided by reference to selected empirical findings from a survey focusing on the October 16, 1971 election of bargaining agent for the faculties of the 14 institutions comprising Pennsylvania's state-owned college and university system.

PREFERENCE FOR BARGAINING REPRESENTATIVE: SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

On October 30, 1971, the AAUP Council adopted the position that "the Association will pursue collective bargaining as a major additional way of realizing the Association's goals in higher education, and will allocate such resources and staff as are necessary for... this activity...."[1] This position was adopted by a vote of 373 to 54, or a ratio of 7 to 1 in favor of the recommendation, at the Fifty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Association in New Orleans on May 6 of this year.[2]

The AAUP decision appears to be a most timely one for a number of reasons. For example, of the approximate 2,537 higher education institutions in the United States,[3] only the faculties of 254 thus far have committed themselves to representation by a specific collective bargaining agent.[4] Despite the increasing number of elections for bargaining representatives taking place throughout the country, there are an estimated 836,000 faculty members still not represented by an agent.[5] It is toward these faculty, who comprise 94 per cent of the total, that prospective bargaining representatives must turn their attention.

Organizations, such as AAUP, which commit themselves to collective bargaining first must be elected or selected by the groups they propose to represent. More often than not, this is a highly competitive undertaking. In light of AAUP's decision committing itself to collective bargaining action, this seems

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[1]"Council Position on Collective Bargaining," AAUP Bulletin, LVII (Winter, 1971), 46-61.

[2]Robert L. Jacobson, "AAUP Votes Overwhelmingly to Pursue Bargaining," The Chronicle of Higher Education, VI (May 15, 1972), 1-2.

[3]A Fact Book on Higher Education (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1970), issue 1, p. 9117.

[4]"Colleges and Universities Where Faculties Have Chosen Collective Bargaining Agents," The Chronicle of Higher Education, VI (May 15, 1972), 2.

[5]Editorial, Illinois Professor, IV (Spring, 1972), 2.

an opportune time for a critical evaluation of various strategems whereby the Association might improve its box score in future arenas of competition.

While the ideal approach to such evaluation would be to look to the general body of literature on selection of bargaining agents for possible guidance, the sad fact immediately apparent is that our empirical homework has been neglected on this matter. Atheoretical, and abounding in rhetoric and untested a priori assumptions, the existing limited literature purporting to describe the election or selection process offers few sound guidelines. As Professor Wollett has observed in his paper presented to the National Conference on Collective Negotiations in May of 1970, "One of the most surprising facts of collective negotiations in higher education is the paucity of reliable information."[6]

The remainder of this paper, therefore, will be devoted to a report and discussion of certain findings from an empirical study focusing on the election process recently completed by the present authors.

A Report and Discussion

The following information is derived from a sample survey of faculty members from the 14 institutions comprising Pennsylvania's state-owned college and university system. The occasion was the October 6, 1971, election of collective bargaining representative for this system, mandated under the 1970 passage of Pennsylvania's Act 195. This legislation enables the state's public employees to organize for collective bargaining, provides for election of a bargaining representative, and grants a limited right to strike.

On April 16, 1971, the authors undertook a survey of attitudes related to the passage of Act 195 and polled faculty as to their possible choice of bargaining representative in the forthcoming October 6 election. The survey was mailed to 2,866

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[6]Donald H. Wollett, "The Status and Trends of Collective Negotiations for Faculty in Higher Education," Wisconsin Law Review, I, 1-29.

faculty representing a stratified random sample of the 4,594 full-time faculty at the 14 state-owned college and university institutions.

The total number of fully completed, usable instruments returned in response to the first mailing of the 73-item questionnaire survey was 813 or slightly less than 30 per cent of the sample, a typical response rate to a first mailing. Because of the sensitivity of the bargaining election issue, the timing of the election, and the cost involved, the researchers chose not to pursue the usual follow-up procedures in an attempt to elicit completed questionnaires from those who did not respond to the first mailing.

Considerable confidence in the validity and representativesness of these data was established when the data collected by the April 16 survey were found to predict the outcome of the October 6 election. The data accurately predicted not only the winner of the election, but the direction of the vote (the proportion of the vote received by each of the vying agents) as well. The three organizations competing for election as the legally acknowledged collective bargaining representative for the faculties of the 14 institutions were the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties/Pennsylvania Association for Higher Education (APSCUF/PAHE), a National Education Association affiliate hereinafter referred to as NEA.[7]

Before proceeding to examine some of the correlates of preference for bargaining agent, a prior question must be examined —— the value of having a bargaining representative at all. In other words, must prospective representatives sell the

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[7]The questionnaire survey instrument, as did the official October 6 election ballot, provided for a vote for any one of these three prospective bargaining agents, in addition to a possible vote for "no agent." The questionnaire item tapping this response read as follows: "The passage of the Public Employee Relations Act permits state college faculties in Pennsylvania to select a bargaining agent. If the election to decide which agency should represent us were to be held today, which agency would you vote for? (Please check one of the following)

AFT_____ AAUP_____ APSCUF/PAHE_____ No Agent_____"

idea of collective bargaining, or can they proceed to show why they are the representative best suited to represent a particular faculty? Did Pennsylvania state college and university faculty see Act 195 as a benefit? Yes. Roughly 60 percent of the faculty members looked with favor upon the passage of Act 195, 18 per cent were not convinced of its benefits, and the remainder were undecided. Incidentally, supporters of the AFT were the most enthusiastic about the passage of this legislation, a finding similar to that of Moore.[8]

Once the decision to select a bargaining representative is made, the question then becomes which agent can offer more to the faculty, or indeed, is there a difference among the competing representatives? The most salient question in the minds of many of the faculty members in evaluating the various agents was how far will the organization go in presenting the demands of its clientele? Would it call a strike?

Regardless of public statements made by agent organizers, an argument can be made that perceptions of faculty members, whether accurate, or distorted and ill-informed, play a large part in their selection of a representative. As might be expected, the AFT supporters were the most militant. Ninety-one per cent of the faculty who expressed a preference for the AFT on the questionnaire agreed with the statement "Teachers should go on strike to secure higher salaries and other benefits." In fact 77 per cent of the AFT supporters not only agreed with the statement, but agreed strongly with it. At the other extreme, only 28 per cent of those faculty who preferred not to have a bargaining representative at all agreed with this statement. Respondents who expressed a preference for NEA and those favoring AAUP took a middle position, with 62 per cent and 66 per cent respectively favoring this item.

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[8]John W. Moore, Pennsylvania Community College Faculty Attitudes toward Collective Negotiations (University Park, Pa.: Center for the Study of Higher Education, 1971), p. 36

It may be easier to illustrate the feelings of the Pennsylvania state college and university faculties with respect to the role of teachers' organizations by means of a tabular presentation. What did the faculties feel teachers' organizations should do for them?

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1 shows a high level of agreement that bargaining representatives should use their influence to get legislation favorable to college faculty passed. There is less agreement on the other three items, but the AAUP is consistently the organization whose partisans are most reluctant to enter the political arena. The difference between those faculty who favored any single one of the competing bargaining representatives and those who preferred no agent is even more striking.

Toward what ends do the supporters of the various organizations want their representatives to enter the political arena? The survey of Pennsylvania respondents contained one overriding priority on the negotiation agenda —— salary. Forty-eight per cent of the total number of respondents mentioned salary as the single most important issue in the election. The issue mentioned next most often, greater control of policy by academic faculty, was considerably further down on the list with only 6.3 per cent of the faculty mentioning it as the issue with highest priority. Tied for third position as most important issues facing the faculties of the Pennsylvania state colleges were a reduction in teaching load and increase in fringe benefits (medical insurance, leave time, etc.) with 6.1 per cent each.

There was variation among the partisans of the agents in the perception of the leading issue of the campaign. Although salary increase was the goal of each of the representatives, and favored even by those who preferred not to be repre-

sented by an agent, the importance of this issue was differentially perceived. Sixty-one per cent of AFT, 55 per cent of NEA, 34 per cent of AAUP, and 32 per cent of those favoring no agent specified salary as the key issue in the campaign. A larger percentage of AAUP supporters was concerned about policy decision-making and academic freedom than were supporters of other agents.

At first, the researchers felt that the relative unconcern of AAUP supporters with salary might be due to the fact that those reporting their intention to vote for AAUP were more established in the state college system, but this was unsupported by the survey data, at least with regard to length of service. AAUP supporters were found to be the most recent newcomers to the state college system, having affiliated most frequently during the 1965-1966 school year.

Faculty preferring to be represented by the AFT joined the system roughly seven or eight years ago, during the 1963-1964 academic year. The median year for entering the state college system by faculty preferring not to be represented by a bargaining agent and for those faculty who supported the NEA was 1962. Interestingly enough, those who had been on campus the longest, the average year of their arrival being 1957, tended to be the respondents who were undecided as to which representative they preferred.

In this connection, another fact should be brought out. The perception of salary as the most important issue to be negotiated did not change much with the number of years a professor had taught in the state college system. Forty per cent of the faculty members who had entered the system since 1968 listed salary as the issue of first priority in negotiations. These faculty could not be expected to have attained tenure at the time the survey was taken. Yet 41 per cent of those who began teaching in the state college system between 1965 and 1967 also considered the salary issue to be dominant, and 35 per cent of those joining the faculty during the time between 1936 and 1964 named salary as the issue of most concern.

The question now arises, is there any easily identifiable faction on campus that could be expected to affiliate with one or another of the specific bargaining representatives? Upon which groups should AAUP concentrate in future campaigns? Which faculty could be expected to support the AAUP and which could be expected to oppose it?

While extensive empirical work on political attitudes and behaviors of professors has yet to be done, Harmon Zeigler's research on the political perceptions of high school teachers suggests that sex difference is an important variable.[9] Likewise, research on community-college faculty attitudes toward collective negotiations by Moore indicates sex as a predictor variable.[10] Does this hold true at the college level with respect to preference for bargaining agent? It does not appear to hold. Although the largest proportion of women (18.7 per cent) comprised those reporting their intention to vote for AAUP as bargaining representative, and those reporting their intention to vote for NEA had the largest absolute number of females, the differences in proportion among the competing agents were not significant.

But in contrast to the lack of relationship found between sex and preference for bargaining agent, the difference in support of a particular representative and earned degree was significant. Although the NEA affiliate drew its support from nearly equal numbers of faculty with liberal-arts degrees and with education degrees, the AAUP drew an overwhelming proportion of support from faculty with liberal-arts type degrees, that is, 82 per cent of those faculty expressing a preference for the AAUP as their choice of bargaining representative held either a B.A., M.A. or Ph.D. AAUP advocates did amass the largest proportion of earned

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[9]Harmon Zeigler, The Political Life of American Teachers (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967).

[10]John W. Moore, op. cit., p. 35.

doctoral degrees. Forty-nine per cent of the professors who preferred the AAUP possessed either a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. compared to 42 per cent of the AFT partisans, 41 per cent of the NEA supporters and 33 per cent of the faculty who did not favor any bargaining representative.

Another pattern that might provide a means to distinguish faculty supporters of different agents is departmental affiliation. Because NEA won the election, it is reasonable to assume that they also carried the majority of departments. With the exception of the social science departments, this is true. But the more important question for bargaining representatives is from what academic quarter did their support come? As expected, the NEA-affiliate drew the most votes from education departments which comprise a large proportion of faculty in all the Pennsylvania state colleges because of their development from teacher's colleges. Faculty who wished to have no representative selected were most likely to be employed in the "hard" sciences, while professors who supported AAUP and AFT were most likely to be found in humanities departments. Respondents who were librarians divided almost equally between AAUP and NEA, but administrators strongly favored the selection of the NEA affiliate.

If the Pennsylvania state college and university system is any indication of the type of individual who supports AAUP in collective bargaining situations, the data generated by the authors' questionnaire survey suggests that this person is a man with a Ph.D. in the humanities or the social sciences who has recently joined the faculty. This may portend well for the future growth of AAUP. This composite person is concerned about salary, but also about academic freedom and having a voice in the policy-making process. About 21 per cent of the AAUP partisans appear to be very active in their particular academic or professional associations, but another 12 per cent has not attended a meeting of their particular professional

association for the last five years. With reference to AAUP, perhaps the recent decision by the Association to pursue collective bargaining will induce more AAUP supporters to become active in this organization.

TABLE 1

Faculty Response to Four Items Concerning
What Teachers' Organizations Should Do

Items	Faculty Response Percentage					
	AAUP	AFT	NEA	No Agent	Undecided	Average-All Respondents
1. Influence legislation	89.6	92.9	93.3	71.8	89.2	90.2
2. Take sides on public issues	57.1	77.2	63.7	30.8	59.4	59.7
3. Endorse candidates in school elections	51.2	70.2	57.5	27.0	43.2	53.5
4. Endorse political candidates	38.4	59.6	53.7	19.3	43.2	46.5

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